

## Remarks to the Coalition for the Restoration of the Black Family and Society

*March 26, 1992*

Welcome, everybody. Please be seated now and relax here. First, let me just say how pleased I am—and I know you'll be, to hear from Lamar Alexander—but pleased I am that he's here. And you talk about something important for our Nation: What he is doing in working for a program that I'll just touch on today but that I think about every single day, our program America 2000, this chance to revolutionize, literally revolutionize American schools to give these kids a break, make them competitive in the future, it's just wonderful. So I know you're going to enjoy hearing from this former Governor who is now working so hard as a Cabinet member to do something for the kids and also, I might say for the teachers, those of you who teach. And so he's here, and you'll be hearing from him.

This, for me, is a very wonderful occasion. I'm looking forward to it. It's not just that I passed my physical a few minutes ago with flying colors. But you know, you always wonder about those things, you know, when you go out to get all this probing and checking, et cetera. But in any event, I feel blessed in that sense.

And let me just—a few serious comments. I have tried as President to preserve and strengthen three significant legacies: world peace, productive jobs for all here in this country, and then strong families. And when it comes to family, I think maybe Barbara said it the best. She said, "What goes on at the White House is not nearly as important as what goes on in your house." And what she was saying was emphasizing the importance of family, the importance of parents reading to kids, families staying together in these troubled times.

And I don't have to remind this group of committed leaders of the disturbing trends that we are bucking. You're fighting them in your neighborhoods, in your churches, and in your communities every single day, with broken hearts. And your hearts have already been stirred by the forces that threaten the American family

and society.

And so let me put it this way: In too many cases, if our Government had set out determined to destroy the family, it couldn't have done greater damage than some of what we see today. Too often these programs, well-intentioned, welfare programs for example, which were meant to provide for temporary support, have undermined responsibility. They've robbed people of control of their lives, destroyed their dignity, in some cases—and we've tried hard to change this—encouraged people, man and wife, to live apart because they might just get a little bit more to put in their pockets.

We've got to do better. I know we've got a lot of reverends here, and I know I'm preaching to the choir—[laughter]—but let me just say this: No group is more aware of the necessity for character-based solutions in communitywide efforts than this coalition. And I want to assure you of our commitment to those same guiding principles, the principles that you try to inculcate into your parishes, into your schools, into your neighborhoods. No one cares more about it than we do. And I just want you to know we are committed. And I want to assure you of my confidence in this partnership, my support for your leadership out there, as I say, on the front lines of the battle for our Nation's families.

I have appointed a commission. You sometimes hear, "Oh, there he goes, one more commission." The mayors came to see me from the League of Cities, large cities like Los Angeles, small cities like a small community out in North Carolina, Plano, Texas, a wide variety of mayors. And they said, "The one thing that we think really gets to the fundamentals of the deterioration in the cities is the deterioration of the American family." So we put together this Commission to take a hard look at how do you strengthen the family, what legislation do you take away that may be dividing families, what legislation can we encourage to help the families and those that are trying

to educate their kids and keep things together. And that Commission I look forward to hearing from. The Chairman of it is Governor Ashcroft out there in Missouri. Mayor Strauss, Annette Strauss, former Mayor of Dallas, is Cochair. And we've got a good Commission who share your views on family. I think the Commission will help a lot.

We've got to create new incentives for excellence. And Lamar will talk to you about that as how it fits into our education program. One incentive: school choice. We have to give all parents, not just the wealthy, the power to choose. And the schools that aren't chosen, as Lamar will explain, then improve themselves. There's a great record of that. And so we need your help there, the power to choose which schools serve the kids the best. And that means public; it means private; it means religious. And I don't believe that's against the Constitution.

We have shown that when we work together we can get the job done. And I want to thank everybody here that helped on the nomination of Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court. He will be an outstanding Justice.

I know you can't do it alone, and I can't do it alone. But I want you to know I am going to continue to do what I can to bring down the walls of intolerance and prejudice in this country. I spoke out about it, will continue to speak out about it. I got a great joy in standing on the steps of the Mississippi capitol and saying in front of, whatever it was, 5,000–10,000 people, that there is no place for anti-Semitism or for racial bigotry or prejudice in this country. It is not regional. This is a national thing. And there's just as much tolerance or intolerance in States in the North or South or East or West. This is a national problem. And we've got to do what we can to make things better, to make things a little less ugly.

When economic conditions are tough, then we find people resorting to prejudice. We find neighbor looking at neighbor suspiciously. And we've got to try to change this. And so I will—I just wanted you all to know not only am I aware of the problem, but I want to do my level-best to be a constructive influence for change.

One thing that's vital to the family is a strong economy. And we're working to im-

prove it. And I need your help on another issue, an issue that points out the urgent need for economic revival and Government reform.

Last week the Congress tried to put through a massive tax increase, the kind that would have stopped, in my view, stopped our economic recovery that's starting dead in the tracks. And I told Congress I'd veto that bill, and I did it. And yesterday the House leadership, Democrats, tried to override my veto. You may not have seen much on this, but what was meant to be a show of strength simply put a spotlight on disarray up there. Not only did the Democrats fail to muster enough votes to override that veto, but they failed to sustain the simple majority that passed the bill last Friday in the first place. And that is almost unheard of. I'm told this is the third time that's happened this century, first time since 1972, twice in the last 60 years. So I want to thank those Members of Congress from both parties who had the courage of their convictions to say no to more taxes on the American family.

That is a beginning. It is not enough. And if Congress really wants to help get this economy moving now, now that we've gotten this underbrush out of the way, to help me create jobs and revive hope, then I say pass this incentive plan that I have up there and to put America back to work.

We know we can't wait for Congress to see the light. And so, beginning today, I've asked a couple of Congressmen, Senator McCain of Arizona, Congressman Harris Fawell of Illinois, to formally introduce our request for rescissions. There are 68 Federal projects that we don't need. They are not related to jobs, and we simply cannot ask the taxpayers, given the needs that you all are aware of, to pay for things that aren't necessary in these troubled times.

So under the rules, what I've proposed now gives Congress 25 days to act, to uphold the cuts that we want to make, or they have to then stand up in broad daylight in front of you, their constituents, to go ahead with a vote, up or down, on spending that we simply don't need. We

may see Congress resort to a lot of political gimmickry to get away from having to cast such a vote in the sunlight, but I think we owe it to the American family and everyone who works hard and struggles to make ends meet to hold the line on spending that is unnecessary. And we're going to keep doing that.

Also this week, the leaders who control Capitol Hill did something else: They began a new effort to remove the spending caps. That's the only protection the taxpayer has, the only defense he has against the excesses of Government spending, these enormous deficits that add to the mortgage on the future of my grandchildren and your children—you're all younger. [*Laughter*] So the Democratic leadership wants to kill those caps so Congress can then go ahead and spend more. And we simply cannot let that happen.

What we're seeing today is the beginning of a battle between those who want to change things up there and those who want to stick with the status quo. And I say, let the status quo people be warned: We are going to be making these changes, taking the case to the American people.

You see, I am very confident about this country. I know we've been through an awful lot. But America will be restored not

just through Government, not Government meddling, empty slogans, symbolic gestures, but by strong, clear voices of reason and then consistent acts of responsibility. And we are going to be restored not by outsiders coming in with a better idea but by people who are passionate about, and this is where you all fit in, passionate about reclaiming your streets, rescuing the kids from the forces that literally would destroy them. And we will be restored. We've got to see our drug program succeed. We've got to see Lamar's program and mine, America 2000, be a success. And there's the challenge.

I thank you for what you've done, teachers, pastors, neighbors, friends. We are not about to give up on the United States. And you know, we've got a lot of blessings out there. Your kids and mine go to sleep at night with a little less fear of nuclear war. That's good. That's a good thing. Now, let's take what we did to change the world and use it working with you all to constructively change America.

Thank you very, very much for what you're doing. Good luck.

*Note: The President spoke at 3:11 p.m. in Room 450 of the Old Executive Office Building.*

## Nomination of Karl A. Erb To Be an Associate Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy

*March 26, 1992*

The President today announced his intention to nominate Karl A. Erb, of Virginia, to be an Associate Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy. He would succeed William D. Phillips.

Currently Dr. Erb serves as Acting Associate Director of Physical Sciences and Engineering in the Office of Science and Technology Policy, Executive Office of the President. Prior to this he served as Assistant Director of Physical Sciences and Engineering in the Office of Science and Technology Policy, 1989–91. In addition, Dr. Erb served

with the National Science Foundation as Deputy Director of the Physics Division, 1991–present, and Program Director of Nuclear Physics, 1986–91.

Dr. Erb graduated from New York University (B.A., 1965) and the University of Michigan (M.S., 1966; Ph.D., 1970). He was born June 30, 1942, in Chicago, IL. Dr. Erb is married, has two children, and resides in Arlington, VA.